

Danesfort Dispatches

A Quarterly Newsletter from the U.S. Consulate General Belfast

November 2009



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Dear American Community,

I am very happy to introduce myself as the new Consul General in Belfast. I arrived on September 8th and began an exciting and busy first two months. I am also very pleased to introduce my deputy Kevin Roland, who arrived in Belfast in July. We are both very happy to be working and living in Belfast for the next three years.

The week after my arrival, U.S. Ambassador to the UK Louis Susman arrived for his first visit to Belfast. On September 11, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced the appointment of a U.S. Economic Envoy to Northern Ireland, Declan Kelly, a prominent private sector businessman based in New York but with deep ties to this island. Mr. Kelly has been busy generating momentum on the business front, having visited four times since his appointment. He has developed structures both in the U.S. and Northern Ireland to foster a targeted and strategic approach to boosting investment and trade between the U.S. and Northern Ireland, and the Consulate will continue to play a key role in his program.

On October 11-12, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited Belfast, meeting with First Minister Peter Robinson and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness. At Stormont, she addressed the 108 members of the NI Assembly. At Queens University, she joined an economic roundtable with the U.S. and NI Working Group that has been established to work with INVEST NI and Declan Kelly to further economic ties between the U.S. and NI. Secretary Clinton then had the honor of cutting the ribbon to symbolize the re-opening Belfast City Hall after its two year restoration. At City Hall, she attended a reception hosted by Lord Mayor Naomi Long for leading civil society leaders. The Secretary's visit was soon followed by an 11-member U.S. Congressional delegation led by Representative John Tanner of Tennessee. For many of the group it was their first visit to Northern Ireland, and they had the opportunity to meet political, business and community leaders throughout Belfast during their two-day visit.

As a newcomer to Northern Ireland, I was amazed at the generous hospitality of everyone who welcomed the Secretary to Belfast. I particularly appreciated the incredible support of the people who helped us arrange the visit – the First Minister and deputy First Minister and their staff; Assembly Speaker Hay and his team who invited the Secretary to speak to the Assembly; Queens University leadership and staff who organized two large events; and the Lord Mayor and City Council, who provided the most beautiful venue in Belfast for a reception for 300 invited guests. The visit was a great success!

I look forward to meeting with many of you in the days and months ahead. I wish you and your family a wonderful Thanksgiving celebration!

Kamala Lakhdhir, Consul General

Bios: Kamala Lakhdhir - http://london.usembassy.gov/nireland/congen_bio.html

Declan Kelly - <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/biog/7063.htm>

Kevin Roland - see article Page 2

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Holiday Travel: Passport Validity and Extra Pages



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Although it seems a bit early to be thinking about Christmas, you can never be too early for getting travel documents in order. If you are planning to travel over Thanksgiving, Christmas or the New Year, make sure your passports are valid for all family members and there are plenty of free visa pages.

For passport renewal information, see our website at <http://london.usembassy.gov/nireland/index.html>.

For non-U.S. citizens traveling to the United States make sure you submit your ESTA application (see page 4 of this newsletter) at least 72 hours before you travel. However, if the application is not approved for some reason, you may not have enough time to apply for and be issued a visa, so we recommend submitting the ESTA application at least one month in advance of travel.

Happy and safe travels!



Post Welcomes New Economic Officer Kevin Roland

Kevin Roland arrived in Belfast on July 10, 2009 following the completion of his assignment as Trade and Investment Team Leader at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, Iraq. A fluent speaker of Arabic, Kevin previously served as First Secretary for Economic Affairs in Cairo, Egypt (2005-2008), where he was responsible for energy, infrastructure, and labor affairs. From 2003-2004 Kevin served as Staff Assistant to then Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs William J. Burns, during which time he traveled extensively to the Middle East and international forum. Kevin also served as an Economic Officer at the U.S. Embassy in Pretoria, South Africa (2001-2003) and as a Vice Consul and Political Officer at the U.S. Embassy in Amman, Jordan (1999-2001) where he handled the internal political, tribal, and Islamist portfolios. He is an alumnus of the Foreign Service Institute's Advanced Arabic Field School in Tunis, Tunisia and has received several meritorious honor awards for his service.

Kevin, a native of Baltimore, Maryland, USA, received a BA in International Studies and Economics from Washington College in Chestertown, Maryland. Prior to joining the Foreign Service, Kevin worked in finance and banking with a large firm and a regional bank in the Baltimore area. He is married and has two children.

Tips On Crime Prevention and Keeping Safe

No home security system is 100% accurate. One of the easiest ways to protect your home and property while away on vacation is to create the impression that someone is still at home.

One good way to create this "lived in" look while you are gone is with the help of a neighbor. Of course, arranging to have a friend or relative check your home periodically is a good idea too. But your neighbors next door can provide around-the-clock security, simply by watching out for any unusual or suspicious activity around your residence, and then calling the police if they think something is wrong.

A vacation or weekend away from home should be a pleasant experience for you and your family. You can make it more enjoyable and carefree by taking a few simple steps to reduce the possibility that your home might be broken into while you are gone.

- ☐ Prior to departure check all doors and windows to ensure all are locked.
- ☐ Do not close blinds and drapes. A "closed up" house is a sure sign of being unoccupied.
- ☐ Disconnect appliances. Eliminate possible fires by disconnecting all nonessential electrical appliances.
- ☐ Leave a car parked in the driveway, or ask a neighbor to park in your driveway.
- ☐ Leave a house key and a phone number with a trusted friend or neighbor where you can be reached in case of an emergency.

For more information on home security, identity theft, scams, internet safety and mobile phone safety, visit the Police Service of Northern Ireland's website under Crime Prevention at:

<http://www.psn.police.uk/index/crime-prevention/personal.htm>.



Spotlight : Social Security Numbers And You

When Social Security was created in 1935, a nine-digit number – the Social Security number (SSN) – was devised to keep an accurate record of each person's Social Security earnings. There is no Federal law that imposes broad restrictions on use of the SSN by businesses, States and local governments. Over the years, Federal and State governments began to use the SSN as the identifier of choice for a variety of governmental program purposes.

Congress has recognized the importance of the SSN and enacted laws requiring its use for some purposes not related to Social Security, such as Federal personal income tax, Medicaid, Food Stamps and Child Support Enforcement programs, and State commercial driver licensing programs. Private businesses such as banks, credit bureaus, insurance companies, medical care providers and other industries have also adopted the SSN to identify individual records.

As the use of the SSN as an identifier has grown, particularly in an increasingly electronic environment, there has been a dramatic increase in the misuse of the SSN. SSN fraud results when someone either obtains an SSN based on fraudulent documents or uses someone else's number or card illegally. SSN misuse means that the number has been used with criminal or harmful intent.

Social Security is taking steps to prevent or deter fraud in the assignment of SSNs and the issuance of Social Security cards. For example, the Social Security Administration (SSA):

- No longer assigns an SSN solely for driver's license purposes;
- Requires a mandatory in-person interview for any individual age 12 years or older who applies for an original SSN card;
- Requires evidence of age, identity and U.S. citizenship or immigration status, including work authorization for all original SSN applicants; evidence of identity for all replacement SSN cards applicants; and evidence of immigration status, including work authorization, for non-citizen replacement card applicants.
- Verifies with the issuing vital records office all U.S. birth certificates for U.S.-born applicants of any age for an original SSN and for U.S. born individuals who ask to correct the date of birth on our records.
- Verifies with the Department of Homeland Security or Department of State all immigration documents for non-citizens applying for an original or replacement SSN card;
- Limits the number of replacement SSN cards an individual may receive to three per year and ten in a lifetime.
- Assigns SSNs and issues Social Security cards based on data collected as part of the process of entry into the U.S. for those who are age 18 and over and lawfully admitted for permanent residence (known as Enumeration at Entry); and
- Assigns SSNs via Enumeration at Birth – a process for assigning SSNs to newborn children as part of the birth registration process at the hospital or birthing center.

In addition, to prevent misuse of personal information:

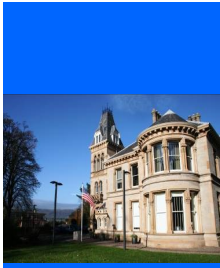
- SSA removed SSNs from the Social Security Statement (displays the last 4 digits of the SSN only);
- The Department of the Treasury removed the SSN and other types of numeric identifies from Federal checks.
- SSA no longer releases SSNs or any personal information to a caller who cannot provide his or her SSN. Such callers are referred to field offices for further verification of their identity before any information is released.
- When SSA assigns a new SSN because a person has been recently disadvantaged by the misuse of his/her SSN, a special indicator is placed on the old SSN record to block issuance of replacement SSN cards and SSN printouts.

These initiatives make SSNs less accessible to those with criminal intent. They prevent individuals from using false or stolen birth records or immigration documents to obtain an SSN. They help to ensure the integrity of the SSN for everyone. People need to be very cautious when giving out their SSN. Being alert to the potential for fraud may save consumers a lot of time and aggravation in the future. Many questions regarding obtaining an SSN or making name changes can be found at the Frequently Asked Questions page for the Federal Benefits Unit at http://www.usembassy.org.uk/cons_new/acs/fbu/index.html.

You can also contact the Federal Benefits Unit in writing at :

Federal Benefits Unit
U.S. Embassy London
Box 0005
24 Grosvenor Square
London
W1A 2LQ





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Selective Service: What Is It?

What is The Selective Service System?

The Selective Service System is an independent agency within the Executive Branch of the Federal Government. The Director of Selective Service is appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. Selective Service is not a part of the Department of Defense.

The Federal law under which the agency operates is the Military Selective Service Act. Under this law, the mission of the Selective Service System is to provide the numbers of men needed by the Armed Forces, within the time required, should Congress and the President decide to return to a draft in the event of a national emergency.

What is Selective Service Registration?

Registration is the process of providing the Selective Service System with personal information, such as name, address, date of birth, Social Security Account Number and other related information. It is a civic and legal responsibility. Even though no one is currently being drafted, men are required to register with Selective Service as soon as they reach age 18. Registering with Selective Service does not mean that you are joining the military. Registration provides our country with a means to develop and maintain an accurate list of names and addresses of men who might be called upon if a return to the draft is authorized. Failure to register or otherwise comply with the Military Selective Service Act is upon conviction, punishable by a fine of up to \$250,000, imprisonment for up to five years, or both. In addition, federal and certain state laws require registration as a prerequisite for obtaining student financial aid, job training, government employment, and U.S. naturalization.

Who Must Register?

With few exceptions, all male United States citizens and male aliens residing in the United States and its territories must register within 30 days of their 18th birthday. Parolees, refugees, and applicants for asylum are considered to be residents of the United States and therefore must register within 30 days of their 18th birthday. Disabled men who are able to function in public, with or without assistance, must register. A friend or relative may help a disabled man complete the registration form if he is unable to do so himself.

For more information please see the Selective Service System's Online Brochure: [Selective Service and You – Time to Register](http://www.sss.gov/SSSYOU/SSSYOU.HTM) (<http://www.sss.gov/SSSYOU/SSSYOU.HTM>) or visit their website to see their [Frequently Asked Questions](http://www.sss.gov/QA.HTM) (<http://www.sss.gov/QA.HTM>).

ESTA - For UK or Irish Passport Holders

The Department of Homeland Security's Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) is now live. As of January 12, 2009, citizens of Visa Waiver Program (VWP) countries - this includes UK and Ireland - are required to obtain travel authorization prior to traveling to the United States visa-free.

Travelers should first ensure that they meet the criteria of the VWP by referring to the "Visa Waiver Wizard" at http://london.usembassy.gov/cons_new/visa/visa_wizard.html. Travelers who are eligible should then apply for travel authorization free of charge at <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov>.

Those who are not VWP eligible or who are denied ESTA authorization (a tiny percentage) should apply for a visa following the instructions on <http://london.usembassy.gov/nireland/nivisa.html>.

ESTA is only required for those traveling without a visa. Anyone traveling with a visa should not apply for ESTA authorization.

Beware of ESTA Scams:

Be aware that applying for travel authorization through ESTA is **free** on the official website. The official U.S. Government website is <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov>. Only the website of the U.S. Embassy or Consulate General in the UK, and domestic U.S. government sites (which always end in ".gov") should be trusted. For a **Fact Sheet, How-To guidance, and further info about ESTA** refer to http://london.usembassy.gov/dhs/esta_info.html and http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/id_visa/esta/.

American Citizen Services—FAQ's

Q: Can I have dual nationality?

A: When a person is naturalized in a foreign state (or otherwise possesses another nationality) and is thereafter found not to have lost United States citizenship, the individual consequently may possess dual nationality. It is prudent, however, to check with authorities of the other country to see if dual nationality is permissible under local law. The United States does not favor dual nationality as a matter of policy, but does recognize its existence in individual cases.

In the 1980's, the Supreme Court ruled that U.S. citizenship is a constitutional right that cannot be taken away from a citizen who does not intend to relinquish it. Therefore, such actions as naturalization in a foreign country, travel on a foreign passport, employment with a foreign government, do not automatically jeopardize American citizenship. However, please note that all U.S. citizens, even dual nationals, must enter and depart the United States on U.S. passports.

For more information, please visit the U. S. Department of State's guidance on dual nationality at http://travel.state.gov/law/citizenship/citizenship_778.html.

Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP)

The Federal Voters Assistance Program (FVAP) provides U.S. citizens worldwide a broad range of non-partisan information and assistance to facilitate their participation in the democratic process - regardless of where they work or live. The FVAP also administers the Federal responsibilities of the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA), which designates armed forces recruiting offices nationwide as voter registration agencies allowing eligible U.S. citizens to apply for voter registration, or apply to change voter registration data.

For more information about the Federal Voting Assistance Program, please visit <http://www.fvap.gov>.



Catch All The Latest - see our Facebook Page and Flickr Site

**Visit the U.S.Embassy London Facebook page for all the latest news
of the U.S. mission in the UK.**

View all the latest outreach events on the Public Affairs Flickr site.

Both are available through the U.S.Embassy webpage at [Http://london.usembassy.gov](http://london.usembassy.gov), in the box titled ~Key Embassy Links~



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Culture Corner

The U.S. Consulate General occasionally provides partial grants for cultural events which have an American element. Some of the events are free, for others there is a charge. This quarter, we encourage you to check out:

Cinemagic Film Festival - November 18 - December 4, 2009 - Cinemagic is an award-winning organization that uses the magic of film and all forms of moving image to entertain, educate, motivate and inspire. Designed for and by young people, Cinemagic caters for young people (age 4 to 25) with just about every level of interest in film. See their website at <http://www.cinemagic.org.uk>.

Lincoln Conversations - November 26, 2009 - A special Thanksgiving Day presentation at The Library at Queens University. The program will include speakers Fred Kaplan, John Stauffer of Harvard University and Frank Williams, author of "Judging Lincoln". Contact Professor Catherine Clinton at catherineclinton@mac.com or telephone 02890 975124.

John Zogby - University of Ulster - December 4, 2009 - Internationally-acclaimed U.S. Pollster John Zogby, political researcher, will share insights on President Obama's approval ratings, as part of the UU's Distinguished International Visitor's Address (DIVA) program. Go to <http://www.socsci.ulster.ac.uk/communication/diva/diva3.html> for more information.

And some dates to keep in mind in 2010: ***6th Annual Guinness Nashville Songwriter Festival*** - February 24-28, 2010 - The festival continues to be a roaring success year upon year. This year's lineup is pretty impressive! Go to www.belfastnashville.com.

Disclaimer: This listing of events, performances and other activities is for information purposes only and does not constitute an endorsement by the U.S. Consulate General Belfast. All opinions expressed by the artists, writers, and performers participating or contributing to the events listed are those solely of the participants and contributors and not the U.S. Government or its designated representatives. Listing information is believed to be correct at the time it is listed but the U.S. Consulate General accepts no liability for subsequent changes to these details and no reliance should be placed upon them.

American Citizen Services: In the event of a genuine emergency involving a U.S. Citizen in Northern Ireland, our after-hours phone number is 0844 736 9614.

Consular Closure Dates

The U.S. Consulate General Belfast will be closed on the following dates:

Thursday, November 26, 2009 - Thanksgiving Day

Friday, December 25, 2009 - Christmas Day

Monday, December 28, 2009 - Boxing Day

Friday, January 1, 2010 - New Year's Day

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KIDS CORNER

Santa is lost! Can you help him find his way back to the North Pole?

